The politics of *Sūqs* in early Islam[·]

Fanny Bessard

f.bessard@bristol.ac.uk

University of Bristol (UK)

Abstract

In the early Middle Ages, while Byzantium was impoverished and Anatolian cities were evolving into fortified *kastra*, the Islamic Near East enjoyed an age of economic and demographic growth. Exploring the formation of *sūq*s and the rise of the Umayyad and early 'Abbāsid states, this article argues that the Arab-Islamic aristocracy's involvement in establishing *sūq*s reflected a desire to exert power and build legitimacy. Despite their physical resemblance to Late Roman and Sasanian bazaars, early Islamic *sūq*s functioned differently, and their specificity exemplifies an evolution of labour patterns from 700 to 950, in particular the social rise and increasing religious involvement of merchants. This article places the archaeological evidence in dialogue with the literary. Although the Islamic material is central, comparisons in the paths of trade and economic life between the Middle East and Western Europe provide ways to identify the divergences between East and West after the fall of Rome.

Keywords

Sūq, Islam, Umayyad, 'Abbāsid, Near East, Economy

Introduction

While Byzantium was considerably impoverished and Anatolian cities were changing into fortified *kastra*, the Umayyad and early 'Abbāsid Caliphates from 661 to the ninth century were marked by population growth, widespread urbanisation in Greater Syria and Iraq, as well as

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increasing monetisation and flourishing urban trade. Market-places, which were already in Late Antiquity an essential organ of Near Eastern city life, continued to play a fundamental role as *spaces* making exchange practicable. These material *spaces* enabled goods to be moved from producers to consumers for the regular provisioning of all households. Market-places were also arenas for realising and forging economic relationships between individuals, who may or may not have shared religious and cultural values, and their maintenance was supported heavily by a form of governance protecting those engaging in exchange and consumption. As public meeting- and market-spaces, they were key areas, under the control of political authority, fiscally and legally regulated by the Imperial power.

In comparison to the Roman world, Byzantium and Medieval Western Christendom, the economic history of the formative Islamic society remains a nascent field of study. The exact way in which exchange functioned at a local level in towns, villages and countryside remains elusive. Since the 1930s, a dozen early eighth-century market-places have been found in the Levant. Yet, such discoveries have mainly been studied for their art historical and architectural values, by Maxime Rodinson[1] in the preface of *El señor del zoco en España,* while the process of market-place development, and whether or not it was politically supervised, has never been fully elucidated.[2] It is also believed that market-places in early Islam functioned as their Late Antique predecessors, with apparently nothing bequeathed from pre-Islamic Arabia where dedicated spaces for trade were extremely rare.[3]

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[1] P. Chalmeta, *El-Senor del Zoco en Espana: Edades media y moderna, contribucion al estudio de la historia del mercado* (Madrid: Instituto Hispano-Arabe de Cultura, 1973): 245-96. There is a revised edition of this text by P. Chalmeta, *El zoco medieval. Contribución al estudio de la historia del mercado* (Almeria: Fundacion Ibn Tufayl De estadios Arabes, 2010).

[2] A.J. Naji and Y.N. Ali published in 1981 an article on the formation of sūqs in early Islamic Baṣra, which however used evidence coming all from literary sources of the ninth and tenth centuries, with an over-reliance throughout on al-Ṭabarī and al-Jāḥiẓ. See "The Suqs of Basrah: Commercial Organization and Activity in a Medieval Islamic City." *JESHO* 24/3 (1981): 298-309.

[3] Daily exchanges were conducted mostly in household courtyards and unbuilt esplanades in pre-Islamic Medina. On pre-Islamic and early Islamic urban commercial spaces, see M. Lecker, "On the markets of Medina (Yathrib) in Pre-islamic and early Islamic Times." *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 8 (1986): 133-147; M.J. Kister, "The Market of the Prophet." *JESHO* 8 (1965): 272-276. See also the archaeological

This paper questions these established theories by introducing a greater sense of the diachronic evolution of medieval market-places in the Near East and the formation of *sūq*s (Arabic plural form *aswāq*) from the blossoming of the Umayyads in 700 up to the political disintegration of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate around 950. How did the changing political, ideological and economic dynamics after the rise of Islam affect retailing? In what ways did early medieval *sūq*s differ from Late Antique *ergastēria*, and what role did they play in the agrarian society of early Islam? What does their specificity tell us about the evolution of labour patterns from 700 to 950 and the way sellers interacted with consumers? In what follows, I explore the connections between politics and *sūq*s, and argue that there was a significant political impetus to develop urban retailing in the Near East boosted by a favourable economic and demographic context after the Arab-Muslim conquests. While Caliphal involvement in urban retailing is well attested in ninth- and tenth-century literary sources, I contend that rulers involved themselves already in this from the first decades of the eighth century providing an instrument for establishing power and legitimacy. While the process had significant symbolic and financial implications, it played a determining role in supporting the growth of local and regional trade across the Near East and enabled a larger pool of consumers to spend their income concurrent with an increasing money supply. Despite their physical resemblance with Late Roman and Sasanian bazaars, the functioning of early Islamic market-places in the Near East, in particular the *sūq,* was a little different. Trade and manufacturing from 700 became more distinctive, and this would, in turn, change the social status and religious involvement of local shopkeepers.

The research underpinning this paper has been directed at reconciling early eighth-century archaeological evidence with ninth- and tenth-centuries literary sources, ranging from local histories to geographical accounts. While material evidence helps to identify functional differences between Late Antique and Medieval market-places, it all dates from the Umayyad dynasty and mostly comes from Greater Syria, where excavations of early Islamic remains have

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research in South Arabia of J. Schiettecatte, *Villes et urbanisation de l'Arabie du Sud à l'époque préislamique: formation, fonctions et territorialités urbaines dans la dynamique de peuplement régionale*, PhD. History. (Paris: Université Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2006): 436-8.

been prolific since the 1990s. The question therefore arises as to whether the patterns of change identified within the Eastern Mediterranean context were regional or applied to the entire Islamic world. Arabic literature provides solid information regarding market-places and the process of their development from the Umayyad period to the tenth century. Nevertheless, they were forged in the ninth and tenth centuries. While their information can be trusted for ʻAbbāsid Iraq, they are less reliable for the earliest century of the Islamic world and what is described as having happened in the late seventh or early eighth century could merely be anachronism with a purpose, that is to legitimise later norms though conjuring established historic antecedents.

1. Politics and *sūqs*

The slowing of Arab-Muslim military expansion from 715 to 750 triggered the evolution of cities and agricultural estates as documented by archaeology and literary sources. The Muslim Arabs began to constitute a new provincial city-based aristocracy, adopting practices inspired by the secular nobility in Greater Syria and Iraq (maps 1 & 2), such as the acquisition and development of large estates known as *qaṭīʻa*.[4] The burgeoning interest in landscape archaeology has greatly contributed to improve our knowledge of the historic patterns of Near Eastern agriculture from Late Antiquity to early Islam. Combined with the literary testimonies of medieval Arab geographers, the material evidence has helped to demonstrate a continuous agricultural dynamism from the sixth to the ninth century in the Near East, except in Cilicia and Lycia in Anatolia, where the economy dramatically declined.[5]

[4] For more on *qaṭīʻa* and early Islamic agricultural developments in Egypt and the Near East, see the recent publications of H. Kennedy, "Great Estates and Elite Lifestyles in the Fertile Crescent from Byzantium and Sasanian Iran to Islam." In *Court cultures in the Muslim world: seventh to Nineteenth centuries*, eds. A. Fuess and J.-P. Hartung (London: Routledge, 2011): 54-79; "Landholding and Law in the Early Islamic State." In *Diverging Paths? The Shapes of Power and Institutions in Medieval Christendom and Islam*, eds. J. Hudson and A. Rodriguez (Leiden: Brill, 2014): 159-81.

[5] T. Wilkinson, *Town and Country in Southeastern Anatolia* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1990): 117, 123, 126, 128.

Moreover, in the first half of the eighth century, Greater Syria and Iraq were the scene of a significant urban boom marked by the foundation of ports and cities[6] in the Fertile Crescent and the semi-arid steppe.[7] The 'Abbāsid revolution of 750 did not hinder this process, although the shift of the centre of power from Greater Syria to Iraq gave a clear impetus to the development of the Eastern provinces of the Islamic world. The emergence of this Muslim Arab elite in Late Antique cities in the eighth- and ninth-century Near East did not provoke the emigration of the local native aristocracy. Such emigration is occasionally mentioned by Medieval historians, such as al-Balāḏūrī who refers to it in relation to Tripoli, Damascus, Ḥomṣ and Bālis. Yet, it was not a widespread phenomenon and the eighth to tenth centuries were generally marked by an increase in population. Historians have suggested that the populations of Baṣra and Kūfa in southern Iraq may have been around 200,000, while the population of Baghdad was anything up to half a million.[8] This, it should be remembered, was at a time when the population of London may have been 10,000, Paris perhaps 20,000; although these figures may well be exaggerated, they certainly illustrate the enormous scale of early Islamic cities in the late Umayyad and early 'Abbāsid Caliphates.

Alongside urban and agricultural development, the intake of metal supplies in Western Africa, Central Asia or Arabia after the rise of Islam, as well as the proliferation of local mints in the

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[6] The bibliography on the foundation of new cities after the rise of Islam is prolific. See in particular for an overview A. Northedge, "Archaeology and New Urban Settlement in Early Islamic Syria and Iraq." In *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, eds. G.R.O. King and A. Cameron (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994): 251-259 and J. Bacharach, "Marwanid Umayyad Building Activities: Speculations on Patronage." *Muqarnas* 13 (1996): 27-44.

[7] Concerning the development of proto-urban and urban settlements in the semi-arid steppe of Greater Syria, the reader should look at Denis Genequand's research. D. Genequand, "Umayyad Castles. The Shift from Late Antique Military Architecture to Early Islamic Palatial Building." In *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria*, ed. H. Kennedy (Leiden: Brill, 2006): 3-25; "From Desert Castle to Medieval Town: Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi (Syria)." *Antiquity* 79 (2005): 350-61; *Les Etablissements des élites omeyyades en Palmyrène et au Proche-Orient* (Beirut: Ifpo, 2012).

[8] See also for Andalusi towns in the early periods of the Middle Ages, Torres Balbás' reconstruction of the demographic growth of Cordoba on the basis of the number of male worshippers who could be accommodated in the city's main mosque. L. Torres Balbas, "Extensión y demografie de las ciudades hispano-musulmanas." *Studia Islamica* 3 (1955): 35-9.

Near East, generated an increase in the flow and quantity of currency in circulation. While Byzantium endured a monetary recession in the late seventh century, the increase in money supply in the Islamic world, which must be located in the continuous history of monetisation going back to the third century,[9] favoured trade, promoted consumption and investment, and might be considered as proto-mercantilism. The Arabisation of Late Antique coinage (the Roman gold *solidi*, *semisses* and *tremisses,* and the copper *follis*, as well as the Sassanian silver *drachme*) from the late seventh century and the establishment of a standardized tri-metallic coinage constituted a further catalyst to support local and long-distance trade, by allowing more fluidity in the exchange mechanisms.[10] Regional economies in Egypt and the Near East experienced consequently an ongoing prosperity from the sixth to the late ninth century, while archaeological evidence indicates that international trade developed from the late eighth century around the Caspian Sea and East Africa.[11]

This highly favourable economic and demographic context explains the growth of urban retail from 700, which was arguably politically supervised. The Roman model of local urban elite involvement in facilitating economic life through patronage or a direct 'entrepreneurial' involvement lingered after the rise of Islam. Evidence of Christian monasteries building

[9] Jairus Banaji argues that in the 380s, Theodosius's decision that a larger share of the land-tax should be levied in money constituted a catalyst in the monetisation of the fiscal system and the economy. Papyrological sources from Egypt and the Negev confirm that this policy was widely implemented in the third to fifth century. J. Banaji, *Agrarian Change in Late Antiquity: Gold, Labour, and Aristocratic Dominance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007): 23-38.

[10] On regional trade in the Near East after the rise Islam, see the numerous publications of A. Walmsley, notably "Production, Exchange And Regional Trade In The Islamic East Mediterranean: Old Structures, New Systems?" In *The Long Eighth Century*, eds. Inge Lyse Hansen and Chris Wickham, series The Transformation Of The Roman World 11. (Brill: Leiden, 2000): 265-343 and "Coinage and the Economy of Syria-Palestine in the Seventh and the Eighth Centuries CE." In *Money, Power and Politics in Early Islamic Syria. A review of Current Deba*tes, ed. J. Haldon (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010): 21-45.

[11] See F. Bessard, "Itinéraires et mutations urbaines dans le *mašreq* islamique (VIIe-IXe siècles)." *Arabica* 64 (2017): 1-27, for a discussion of the political and social mechanisms that were involved in redrawing the map of trading networks after the Islamic conquest of the Near East. The paper highlights the progressive rupture of the past's equilibrium from 700 onward and the emergence of new commercial itineraries up to the tenth century.

amenities for wine, oil, ceramic or metal[12] production beyond local consumption is still perceptible. In the monasteries of Sobata[13] in the Negev and Deir Ghazali[14] near Jerusalem, the discovery of eighth- and ninth-century wine and oil presses is a testament to this. The monastery of Nabi Samwil in Palestine also remained a significant contributor to the production of jars with seal impressions in Arabic after the rise of Islam.[15] Nevertheless, the traditional Late Antique form of individual patronage dwindled after the rise of Islam, as the Muslim imperial authorities became increasingly involved in urban planning. Although the contemporary evidence for any ruling involvement in the late seventh and early eighth centuries is extremely limited, this paper advances the theory that a new class of Arab-Muslim aristocrats began to pursue an entrepreneurial and intensive investment policy already from the time of the Umayyad Caliphate.

A story, reported in al-Samhūdī's (d. 1506) fifteenth-century history of Medina, suggests that during his reign, Caliph Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān (661-680), initiated this practice by founding the covered markets of *dār al-qaṭirān* and *dār al-nuqṣān* in the Holy city of Medina and converting a pre-existing residential property into a market for dried dates.[16] This story is based on the now lost earlier account of Ibn Zabāla, who was a native of Medina and died after 814. Harry Munt[17] has pointed out that Ibn Zabāla offers a late eighth-century presentation of Medina and Muʿāwiya's concern for developing market-places in the holy city may have purely been a myth. Even if this is the case, Ibn Zabāla was very likely inspired by the practice of his time and this

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[12] A. Harrak, *The Chronicle of Zuqnīn* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute, 1999): 192. Zuqnīn mentions the monk Isaac of the monastery of Qartmin in Jazira, who was practising alchemy of silver and gold during the reign of al-Manṣūr.

[13] P. Figueras, "Monks and Monasteries in the Negev Desert." *Liber Annuus* 36 (1995): 439.

[14] G. Avni, The Byzantine-Islamic Transition in Palestine: An Archaeological Approach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 147.

[15] Y. Magen, M. Dadon, "Nebi Samwil (Montjoie)." In *One Land – Many Cultures, Archaeological Studies in Honour of Stanislao Loffreda*, eds. G.C. Bottini *et al.* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 2003): 123-38.

[16] Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafāʾ bi-aḫbār dār al-mustafa* 2 (Beirut, 1975): 750.

[17] See Harry Munt's discussion on Ibn Zabāla and his history of Medina, in "The prophet's City before the Prophet: Ibn Zabāla (d. after 199/814) on Pre-islamic Medina." In *History and Identity in the Late Antique Near East*, ed. Philip Wood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): 103-120.

shows that urban economic amenities were of interest for the ruling elite at least from the time of the late Umayyad or very early ʻAbbāsid dynasty.

The reliability of the other accounts we possess on early Umayyad elite involvement in urban economy is equally debatable. Composed in the ninth and tenth centuries, they all come from the contemporary historians Ibn ʻAbd al-Ḥakam (d. 871), al-Balāḏurī (d. 892) and Ibn Baḥshāl (d. 904-5), and depict the caliphate of ʻAbd al-Malik (685-705) as having been a period of intense building of retail-stores across Egypt, Greater Syria and Iraq, by princes and local governors. The chronicle of the Egyptian Ibn ʻAbd al-Ḥakam relates, for instance, that the growth of the town of Fusṭāṭ, during the governorship of ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz, brother of ʻAbd al-Malik, led to the expansion of the great mosque of ʻAmr b. al-ʻĀṣ,[18] as well as the construction of a roofed *qayāsir* and several warehouses (*dūr)*.[19] According to the chronicler Ibn Baḥshāl, several *sūq*s were also built at the very end of the seventh century in Wāsiṭ in Iraq, under the order of governor Yazīd b. Abī Muslīm. The governor designed them to function as a set of defined zones for various commodities and the streets took on the name of the trade plied there, such as fragrance shops (*ʻaṭṭārīn*) and grocers (*baqqālīn*).[20] The account of al-Balāḏurī indicates that ʻAbd al-Malik's policy influenced his son, Prince Sulaymān, who patronised the foundation of a workshop for the production of costly dyed fabrics (*dār al-ṣabbāghīn*) when he had the city of al-Ramla built in Palestine in 715.[21] This narrative may of course simply be a later invention to celebrate Caliph ʻAbd al-Malik, whose reign characterised by order, political unity and expansion, corresponded to ʻAbbāsid expectations in the ninth and tenth century. This said, their accuracy would come as no surprise considering the amount of work Caliph ʻAbd al-Malik b. Marwān conducted to

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18 Ibn ʻAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922): 131-2; P. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State: the World of a Mid-Eighth-Century Egyptian Official* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): 79-80.

19 Ibn ʻAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ*: 136.

20 Ibn Baḥšal, *Taʻrīḫ Wāsiṭ* (Baghdad: Gurguis ʻAwwād, 1967): 43.

21 Al-Balāḏurī, *Kitāb futūḥ al-buldān* (Leiden: De Goeje, 1866): 143. D. Sourdel, "La fondation umayyade d'al-Ramla en Palestine." In *Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Vorderen Orients*, ed. A Noth (Leiden: Brill, 1981): 389; M. Rosen-Ayalon, "The First Century of Ramla." *Arabica* 43 (1996): 250-63.

facilitate the pilgrimage and ease of trade as illustrated in the dozen Arabic inscriptions on milestones found across southern Greater Syria.[22]

Caliph Hishām b. ʻAbd al-Malik, who reigned from 724 to 743, is the first ruler whose deliberate patronage of urban retail and craft through local governors can be safely inferred from contemporary archaeological and written evidence. Archaeological evidence comes in the form of the famous dated Arabic inscriptions of the Umayyad *sūq* of Silvanus Street in Baysān that developed as a lively commercial town after the rise of Islam.[23] The mosaic inscriptions commemorate its foundation following an order given by the caliph and his governor Isḥāq b. Qabīṣa in 738.[24] These inscriptions certainly give cause to suspect, when taken with later literary evidence, that the foundation of these new shops in Baysān was but one example of a conscious imperial impetus to patronise. They are striking illustrations of early Muslim caliphs' use of material culture to assert their identity among a predominantly Christian and Jewish population. The mosaic inscriptions would no doubt have constituted a reminder of the benevolence of caliphal authority thereby strengthening the allegiance of the people.

The literary sources point to this too. During the reign of Hishām, when the former military campsite of Kūfa in Iraq evolved into a city, the governor Hālid al-Qasrī (723-737) promoted the development of permanent market-places. The account of this comes from the ninth-century history of al-Ṭabarī, which is based on an earlier testimony from the local historian Abū Miḫnaf

[22] These inscriptions are discussed in the following publications. M. Van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum* 2, tome 1-fascicule 1 (Cairo: IFAO, 1922): 3-29; M. Sharon, "An Arabic Inscription From the Time of the Caliph ʻAbd al-Malik." *BSOAS* 29/2 (1966): 367-72; A. Elad, "The Southern Golan in the Early Muslim Period. The Significance of Two Newly Discovered Milestones of ʻAbd al-Malik." *Der Islam* 76 (1999): 33-88; K. Cytryn-Silverman, "The Fīfth mīl from Jerusalem: another Umayyad milestone from southern Bilād al-Shām." *BSOAS* 70 (2007): 603-10.

[23] For more on early Islamic Baysān, see G. Foerster, Y. Tsafrir, "From Scythopolis to Baysān, Changing Concepts of Urbanism." In *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East* 2, eds. G.R.D. King and A. Cameron (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994): 101-105.

[24] E. Khamis, "Two Wall Mosaic Inscriptions from the Umayyad Market Place in Baysān." *BSOAS* 64/2 (2001): 159-176; "The Shops of Scythopolis in Context." In *Objects in Contexts, Objects in Use*, eds. L. Lavan *et al.* (Leiden: Brill, 2007): 447-9.

(d. 774). Abū Miḫnaf[25] was a respected Umayyad historian and native of Kufa who wrote extensively on the first Islamic dynasty. He was a scrupulous scholar who used family records, accounts of his own tribe of al-Azd and other kūfan testimonies, and whose information can therefore be regarded as reliable. Abū Miḫnaf reports that in Kūfa's campsite, merchants were originally operating haphazardly.[26] They traded in empty areas under awnings covered by straw mats and supported by reed piles. This changed under the governorship of Hālid al-Qasrī, as the original collection of tents developed into an established settlement. Hālid encouraged traders to specialise in particular activities and to carry out their business from a permanent location. It is mentioned that he patronised the foundation of shops along the northern and eastern sides of the congregational mosque. The geographer al-Ya'qūbī later signals that the shops were not randomly given to the merchants, but according to their professions for a cash rent.[27] While Abū Miḫnaf's report that the development of Kūfa market-places was politically supervised under the rule of Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik can be trusted, the initiative to reap significant financial benefits may well have been a later norm that conditioned the geographer's reading of past practice.

Caliph Hishām's interest in the urban economy also illustrates itself in his patronage of several commercial facilities that bore his name, in Ḥimṣ, Ruṣāfa and al-Raqqa. A series of shops in Ḥimṣ were constructed near the Rastan Gate, which became toponymically known as *sūq Hishām*. Its foundation is reported in the ninth-century collection of *hadith* from Nu'aym b. Hammad, who relies on the contemporary account of a certain 'Abd al-Salām b. Marwān. The account of this early eighth-century theologian of Ḥimṣ would have been transmitted by the traditionalists Safwān al-Saqsaqī (d. 772) and Abū Bakr b. Abī Maryam (d. 773). It indicates that there originally existed a market-place near Rastan Gate. However, during the reign of Yazid II (720-

[25] For a discussion on Abū mihnaf see thse following publications from 'Abd al-Aziz al-Duri and Ursula Sezgin. U. Sezgin, *Abū Miḫnaf: ein Beitrag zur Historiographie der umaiyadischen Zeit* (Leiden: Brill, 1971); A.A. Duri, *The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983): 43-45.

[26] Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīḫ al-rusul wa al-mulūk* 3, Secunda Series (Leiden: Brill, 1879-1901): 655.

[27] Al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān* (Leiden: M.J. De Goeje, 1892): 311; H. Djaït, *Al-Kufa, Naissance de la ville islamique* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1986): 274-7.

724), this old market-place was destroyed during a fight between the tribes of Qudā'a and Himyar. Yazīd II's successor, Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik (724-43) had the market rebuilt, which exemplifies the extraordinary concerns the Caliph had for the promotion of trade and production through the construction of economic amenities.[28]

While 'Abbāsid caliphs perpetuated and consolidated this practice of patronising economic amenities, it also became a way to reap significant benefits, especially as the Roman[29] custom of levying a ground rent or *ḍarībat al-aswāq* on market-places and workshops was continued or at least reintroduced, possibly following a short hiatus under the Umayyads. The major cities of Baghdad and Sāmarrā, in what is today Iraq, both offer further instances of how the authorities acted as organising agents to develop these areas and rent the facilities. The foundation and early development of both cities are described in great detail by the ninth-century geographer al-Ya'qūbī. Although he lived a century after Baghdad's initial construction, his description relies on contemporary accounts from his ancestor Wāḍiḥ, who at the time occupied a high position in the government. In his description of the round city, al-Ya'qūbī notes that in 762, Caliph al-Manṣūr originally had shops built in the arcades (or *ṭāqāt*) along the ramparts of the city.[30] The prosperity of these outlying shops was short-lived, however, as they were definitively taken down in 774 for security reasons[31] and re-grouped in the neighbourhood of al-Karḫ in the southwest of the city, between the Ṣarāt and 'Īsā canals. This decision to turn al-Karḫ into the capital's commercial centre was probably deliberate, as an old pre-Islamic market-place had

[28] W. Madelung, "Apocalyptic Prophecies in Ḥimṣ in the Umayyad Age." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 31-2 (1986): 141-85.

[29] M.J. Kister, "The Market": 272-6. According to the Islamic traditionalist al-Samhūdī, this practice did not exist in Arabia in the early seventh century. The Islamic traditions explain that Prophet Muḥammad considered as inappropriate to generate a profit or request a tax from shopkeepers and craftsmen, and consequently freedom was given to merchants and artisans to determine the price of their commodities with no interference in their activities. Archaeological evidence tends to confirm that trade was indeed spontaneously conducted in the courtyard of households or in unbuilt esplanades. This suggests that in the eighth and ninth centuries, the late Umayyad and early 'Abbāsid caliphs were most likely influenced by Roman and Sasanian fiscal regime. J.-J. Aubert, "Law, Business Ventures and Trade." In *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Law and Society*, eds. C. Ando, K. Tuori, P.J. Du Plessis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016): 621-34.

[30] Ḫaṭīb al-Baġdādī, *Ta'rīḫ Baġdād* (Cairo, 1931): 80.

[31] Ḫaṭīb al-Baġdādī, *Ta'rīḫ*: 80-81.

taken up the site in the past.[32] An account from the ninth-century chronicle of al-Ṭabarī suggests how aware the caliph was of the economic rationale of choosing this site, which lay at the heart of a network of rivers and canals.[33] Again, the development of a mercantile neighbourhood seems to have resulted from a well-planned initiative of the sovereign. Al-Manṣūr organised the market-place so that the merchants would be regrouped into categories of specialised trade, each group being independent from the other, as indicated by chroniclers al-Hātib and al-Ya'qūbī.[34] The caliph also ordered to have market-places built in each borough, and allotted them to family members and officers. In this way, Baghdad was provided with several commercial areas, some of which had their own identity because of their high degree of specialization. Al-Balāḏūrī reports that most shops founded in the commercial quarter of al-Karḫ were rented to traders.[35] The shopkeepers did not have any property rights in the market-places. The facilities belonged to the Caliph who received a ground rent. This rent was part of the *musta ghallāt* (revenue-generating properties). The tenth-century chronicle of al-Ṭabarī confirms these reports, while offering additional details. He mentions that the rent would have varied according to the size of each shop and location of the shopkeepers' premises by rivers, city walls, ports or main thoroughfares and that its yearly collection was still ongoing at the time of writing.[36] This confirms that premises were rented for long-term periods. This contrasted strongly with early medieval Western Europe. In the West, the sellers were bound to their overlords - typically an abbot, bishop, landowner - by short-term contracts. Here, the sellers rented a certain space or a booth on the market-place for the time period of one market session.

The permanent prominence of the urban marketplace in the Islamic Middle East from 700 to 950 certainly contrasted with Western Christendom also in that the European system of

[32] J. Lassner, *The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970): 147-8.

[33] Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīḫ* 1, Tertia Series: 323-25.

[34] Ḫaṭīb al-Baġdādī, *Ta'rīḫ*: 61-2.

[35] Al-Balāḏurī, *Kitāb futūḥ*: 295.

[36] Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīḫ* 1, Secunda Series: 324.

exchange mostly took place in the form of weekly rural markets.[37] These markets were by contrast to those found in Near Eastern cities developed more organically to cater to local needs. In most areas of Carolingian Europe, with a few exceptions notably in Italy, they grew out of the local initiative of monasteries or aristocratic families,[38] in contradistinction to the market-places in early Islam, which were institutions sponsored by imperial patronage.

2. An evolution of labour patterns

The foundation of market-places after 700 supported the ongoing prosperity and development of regional exchange, which directly triggered division of labour and the evolution of the merchant's social status. While production in the Late Roman world was commonly located at home or in individual street-front shops (*tabernae* and *ergasteria*), the eighth to tenth centuries saw a significant distinction being gradually established between production, trade and domesticity. This finds material illustration in the development of large nucleated workshops, which existed at a very embryonic form at the end of Antiquity[39] as well as in the changing shape and function of street-front shops.

Luke Lavan and Toon Putzeys[40] argue that Late Roman market-places in the East and Central Mediterranean cities street-front shops often involved an integration of retail with secondary

[37] A. Verhulst, *The Carolingian Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 90-91.

[38] M. Costambeys, M. Innes, S. Maclean, *The Carolingian World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 353-75.

[39] Vast Roman and Late Roman fulleries, fish-salting and murex dye industries have been uncovered at Timgad in Algeria, Sabratha and Euesperides in Libya. A. Wilson, "Urban production in the Roman world: the view from North Africa." *Papers of the British School at Rome* LXX (2002): 231-73.

[40] L. Lavan, "From Polis to Emporion ? Retail and Regulation in the Late Antique City." In *Trade and Markets in Byzantium*, ed. C. Morrisson (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 2012): 347-51; "Fora and Agorai in Mediterranean Cities: Fourth and Fifth Centuries AD." In *Social and Political life in Late Antiquity*, eds. W. Bowden, C. Machado, A. Gutteridge (Leiden: Brill, 2006): 195-249; T. Putzeys, L. Lavan, "Commercial Space in Late Antiquity." In *Objects in Context, Objects in Use: Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity*, eds. L. Lavan, E. Swift, T. Putzeys (Leiden: Brill, 2007): 81-109.

craft production – for instance metal,[41] oil,[42] pottery[43] working, glassblowing[44] and cloth making.[45] They had left distinctive architectural features (vats, kilns, crucible fragments, twin-screw presses), broken tools and waste products. These stalls, incorporating both secondary production and retail, were generally single-storey constructions built on a square plan and included one or two rooms.

The medieval *sūqs* bore a definite continuity of structure with the Late Antique street-front market-places, in the sense that they were organised not by ethnicity or clan as those of Medina at the time of Prophet Muḥammad,[46] but by profession in line with the corporatist traditions of Late Roman and Sasanian Antiquity. This model of 'sectorialisation' spread in the Roman world and was adopted in most of the early Islamic *sūq*s from Iran to the Maghreb. A contemporary description, by the eighth-century traditionalist Ṣafwān al-Saqsaqī, of the market al-Rastān in Ḥimṣ in Syria during the caliphate of Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik (724-743) confirms that a demarcation by trade was favoured over that of clan or faith.[47]

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41 N. Kellens, P. Degryse, P. Muchez, J. Naud, M. Maelkens, "Iron Production Activities and Products at Roman to Early Byzantine Sagalassos." In *Archaeometry in Europe, Proceedings 1, Milan, September 24-26* (Milan: Associazione italiana metallurgia, 2003): 545-54.

42 Evidence of metal, carpentry and oil manufacturing has been unearthed in the third century shops of the temple of Zeus in Jarash. J. Seigne, "Recherches sur le sanctuaire de Zeus à Jérash (Octobre 1982-Décembre 1983). Rapport préliminaire." *JAP* 2 (1986): 29-59.

43 For instance, remains of a small-scale lamp production in Apamea have been found in shops along the south *decumanus.* J.C. Balty, *Guide d'Apamée* (Brussels: Centre Belge de Recherches Archéologiques à Apamée de Syrie, 1981): 104.

44 Glass furnaces for blowing were discovered in the Late Antique street-front market-places of Aphrodisias and Ephesus in Asia Minor - R.R.R. Smith, C. Raté, "Archaeological Research at Aphrodisias in Caria." *AJA* 102 (1998): 225-50; C. Czurda-Ruth, "Glas aus Ephesos: Hanghaus 1 und eine Werkstätte des 6. Jahrhunderts n. Chr auf der Agora." In *Annales du 16e Congrès de l'Association Internationale pour l'Histoire du Verre, London 2003* (Nottingham, 2004): 158-61 – as well as in Baysān in Palestine - E. Khamis, "The Shops": 453-4; Y. Gorin-Rosen, "Glass Workshop." *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 17 (1998): 27-9.

45 Cloth making and dyeing activities left visible traces in Beirut's Late Roman shops. K. Butcher, R. Thorpe, "A Note on Excavations in Central Beirut 1994-6." *JRA* 10 (1997): 291-306.

46 Al-Samhūdī, *Wafā' al-wafā' bi-aḫbār dār al-muṣṭafā* 2 (Beirut, 1975): 747-8. A series of traditions indicate that the market of Medina was divided into areas of religious faiths at the time of the Prophet Muḥammad. Jewish and Muslim shopkeepers had their own commercial premises.

47 W. Madelung, "Apocalyptic": 141-85.

However, despite obvious physical and organisational similarities, the early Islamic *sūqs* acquired their own identity and functioned in a different fashion from that of Late Antiquity. It seems that the combination of production and retail was less evident. It is most likely that a form of elementary production in the *sūqs*, inherited from Late Antiquity, persisted in some shops after the Muslim conquests. Nevertheless, what disappeared in the Umayyad archaeological levels is all the heavy equipment such as ovens, dyeing vats, oil presses and crucibles. All activities involving the use of fire, chemical products, water and the resulting polluting waste were subsequently removed to the outskirt of the city and no longer carried out by sole individuals.[48]

Archaeological studies have confirmed that several Late Roman street-front shops, which incorporated both production and retail, were abandoned in the early eighth century and replaced by solely commercial stalls in Baysān, Apamea and Jarash. Between 1966 and 1978, the Belgian expedition of Jean-Charles Balty, in the southeast quarter (known as the 'triclinos insula') of Apamea in Syria, uncovered an episcopal group (the east cathedral), a fourth-century palace (the official residence of a dignitary from the province of Syria Secunda), as well as a row of shops. Between 1975 and 1978, the excavation of these Late Roman shops[49] established on the northern side of the *decumanus*, unearthed remains of kilns, as well as over three hundred lamps, many of which were intact and had never been used, tossed aside on the pavement with several dozen moulds for making them.[50] It was recorded that these shops were partially destroyed during the Persian incursions from 613 to 628 and then completely abandoned after the rise of Islam. The artisans were relocated in the disused 'Triclinos' house and the eastern

[48] By comparison, the smelly, dirty, and even flammable activities were not prohibited from the urban centre in the Roman period. See for instance the article of O. Láng on the Roman town of Aquincum, on the left bank of the Danube, in the area of modern Budapest. O. Láng, "Industry and Commerce in the City of Aquincum." In *Urban Craftsmen and Traders in the Roman World*, eds. Andrew Wilson and Miko Flohr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016): 352-76.

[49] This datation to the early or middle of the sixth century rested on the excavation of Justinian coins struck between 527 and 565. J.C. Balty, *Guide d'Apamée*: 104.

[50] J.C. Balty, *Guide d'Apamée*: 104.

cathedral in the early eighth century. These buildings were diverted from their domestic and religious functions to fulfil new economic purposes. Artisans came to settle among their unbuilt courtyards and gardens, where Islamic silver coins dated to 700-750 have been excavated. Simultaneously, a new market-place emerged, along the southern side of the *decumanus*, with shops designed upon the Late Antique model but solely used for retail. These discoveries illustrate Apamea's economic transition from Late Antiquity to early Islam. They show that the new power took steps to restore local economic life, by converting abandoned domestic and religious monuments into artisanal workshops and by providing Apamea with a new market-place. Material evidence suggests a phenomenon of progressive separation between urban trade and artisanal production after 700. A pronounced differentiation was established between the street-front marketplace and the areas of production grouped slightly further back on the remains of the Triclinos house.[51] The passage from the Late Antique *ergastērion* to the medieval *sūq* was therefore marked by the combination of replicating the facilities of the Late Roman world, alongside a stronger specialisation in storage and sales. Similar evidence of focusing attention exclusively on retail within the Middle Eastern street-front market-places post-700 can be found in Boṣra, Jarash or Baysān. The retail space looked similar to the shops of Roman times, except the production of goods within the same premises (such as in a backroom or adjacent workshop) did not now typically feature.

The artisans, who were carrying on their craft in Late Antique markets, left their individual shops for the manufacturing quarters that emerged on the immediate outskirts of the large cities from the eighth century and have left visible archaeological traces in many cities in Greater Syria, both ports (Beirut, Arsūf, Tiberias) and inland towns (Baysān, Apamea). This clustering process of production in urban settlements after the rise of Islam illuminates significant changes

[51] J.C. Balty, "L'édifice dit au triclinos." In *Colloque Apamée de Syrie. Bilan des recherches archéologiques 1965-1968* (Brussels: Centre Belge de Recherches Archéologiques à Apamée de Syrie, 1969): 105-16; C. Jourdain, "Sondages dans l'insula au triclinos, 1970 et 1971." In *Colloque Apamée de Syrie. Bilan des recherches archéologiques 1969-1971* (Brussels: Centre Belge de Recherches Archéologiques à Apamée de Syrie, 1972): 113-42.

in the control of labour and its social representation. Indeed, we can argue that the increased groupment of artisans in isolated quarters may have acted as a symbolic, legal and administrative boundary. It seems that it was favoured from the early eighth century to make distinct the workplace from the domestic space, this latter becoming progressively reduced to an area of consumption. Although this process may be interpreted as a classic dichotomy, with a fence separating 'pure' and 'impure polluted' areas, it also indicates a desire to orientate production towards profit. Craftspeople could now share raw materials, labour and specialised skills. Costly equipment and facilities could be used collectively, saving labour and capital and realising economies of scale. It is a likely consequence that that these working communities and their physical distinction from the home may have led to a greater professionalism among the artisanal classes, as well as a stronger social and professional identity.

This physical distancing between selling and heavy manufacturing characterised Middle Eastern cities after the rise of Islam and well beyond into the second millennium. As Jessica Goldberg argues, although Genizah merchants in the eleventh century could indeed engage in manufacturing, their primary role was to purchase, ship and sell commodities.[52] The greater involvement of many shopkeepers in retail (or retail combined with small craftsmanship) emerged at a moment when the social status and role of merchants and religious involvement became redefined. Literary evidence suggests that in the ninth to tenth centuries traders emerged as a new urban élite, distinct from the secular aristocracy, because of their primary interest in capital and commerce rather than in patrimonial landowning.

3. *Islamification* of market-places

Alongside an active development of urban market-places to serve ideological and economic needs, the Muslim political authorities pursued a conscious Islamification of the daily working of market-places between 700 and 950, through the establishment of mosques in their vicinities

[52] J. Goldberg, *Trade and Institutions in the Medieval Mediterranean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 115-7.

and the redefinition of the function of market-inspectors, in conjonction with the spread of Islam and the formation of Islamic jurisprudence in the ninth century.

We know from Syrian archaeological sources that mosques were built as early as the first decades of the eighth century within Late Antique and Umayyad market-places in Greater Syria, such as in Palmyra, Jarash or Ruṣāfa.[53] The ninth- and tenth-century Arabic geographical accounts bring additional information showing that this pattern continued under the 'Abbāsids and spread from Egypt to Iran. Describing the old town of al-Qādisiyya in Iraq, al-Muqaddasī mentions for instance a typical Sasanian settlement with a fortress in mud-brick and a mosque built in the heart of the retail-shops.[54] In his description of Baṣra, the tenth-century geographer also locates the early Islamic congregational mosque in the bāb al-Jami' central *sūq*s.[55] The shops spread alongside its north-western façade and in the late ninth and tenth centuries were mostly rented by booksellers, textile retailers,[56] money-changers,[57] and slave traders[58]. In the immediate vicinity of the Friday mosque were thus located the professions highly regarded or carefully controlled by local religious authorities.[59]

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[53] See the following archaeological reports. L. Blanke *et al.* "From Bathhouse to Congregational Mosque: Further Discoveries on the Urban History of Islamic Jarash." *ADAJ* 51 (2007): 177-97; D. Genequand, "An Early Islamic Mosque in Palmyra." *Levant* 40/1 (2008): 3-15 and Th. Ulbert, "Beobachtungen im Westhofbereich der Basilika von Resafa." *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 6 (1992): 403-07.

[54] Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm* (Leiden: M.J. De Goeje, 1877): 117.

[55] Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*: 117.

[56] Al-Ǧāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-biġāl* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1955): 29-30.

[57] Nāṣiri Ḫusraw, *Safarnāma* (Cairo, 1945): 146.

[58] Al-Ǧāḥiẓ, *al-biġāl*: 29-30.

[59] Other examples of Near Eastern cities after the Muslim conquests with mosques built within their pre-Islamic or early Islamic market-places are reported by al-Muqaddasī and can be found at Tiberias, Qadas, al-Nu'māniyya, al-Madā'in, al-Sinn and Nisibe. Many other examples are mentioned in the section on the *Mašreq and the Šām*. Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*: 122-123, 140, 161-2, 165, 175. Ibn Ḥawqal, describing the cities of Zarandj in province of Seistan, as well as Herat and Balḫ in Bactriane, also notes this architectural dependency of mosques and market-places in early Islamic towns. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ* (Leiden: M.J. De Goeje, 1939): 415, 437, 448.

A similar interdependence of Friday mosques and market-places, with the religious buildings built on the edge of the principal rows of shops, existed in the cities of Wāsit,[60] al-Daskara, Qaṣr ibn Hubayra and Jabbul in Iraq.[61] This dependency, gradually established after the rise of Islam, between *sūq*s and mosques, instead of churches, points to a conscious process of the Islamification of daily urban commercial life. Mosques increasingly replaced churches in giving guidance, housing the official weights and measures, and appointing civil servants in charge of regulating trade.[62]

In the Late Antique Near East, the regulation of market exchanges fell to the market inspector, as is stressed by Pedro Chalmeta,[63] and it is most likely that this continued with little modification under the new Muslim authorities. Late Islamic traditions report that this function existed also in seventh-century Mecca and Medina,[64] although it is highly plausible that this narrative may have been produced in order to attribute to the Prophet the origin of an institution in fact derived from the Roman and Sasanian empires. Under the Umayyad rulers, the function of market inspector, translated in Arabic as *ʻāmil al-sūq*,[65] represented a powerful judicial role. The

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60 In Wāsit, the Mosque of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ, which had fallen into ruins in the tenth century, was originally built in the late seventh century on the edge of the markets according to al-Muqaddasī. Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*: 118.

61 Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*: 118, 121-2.

62 R.P. Buckley, "The *Muḥtasib*." *Arabica* 39 (1992): 65-7.

63 P. Chalmeta, *El-Senor del Zoco en Espana*: 245-96.

64 In Mecca and Medina, Muḥammad would have appointed the first persons with jurisdiction over the market. These officials were to ensure the orderly running of business transactions. The Prophet would have appointed in Medina Saʿīd b. Saʿīd b. al-ʻĀṣ in 629 and a female - Samrā bint Nuhayk al-Asadiyya - who most likely had jurisdiction over the women's section of the market. After the death of Prophet Muḥammad, the first four Caliphs (Rašīdūn) perpetuated this practice of appointing inspectors at Medina and Mecca from 632. Cf. Ibn ʻAbd Al-Barr Al-Qurṭūbī, *Al-Istiʻāb fī maʻrifat al-aṣḥāb* 2 (Cairo: Maṭbaʻat nahdat miṣr, 1960): 183, 621. R.P. Buckley, "The *Muḥtasib*": 60-1. ʻŪmar b. al-Ḫaṭṭāb (634-644) is also reported to have employed al-Šifā bint ʻAbd Allāh to oversee the market in Medina. Ibn Ḥazm, *Ǧamharāt ansāb al-ʻarab* (Cairo: Dār al-maʻārif, 1962): 150, 156. Al-Sā'ib b. Yazīd and ʻAbd Allāh b. ʻUṭba b. Masʻūd were designated as market inspectors during the caliphate of ʻŪmar, and ʻŪṯmān b. ʻAffān (644-656) is said to have appointed al-Ḥāriṯ b. al-Ḥakam over the *sūq* of Medina. Al-Balāḏurī, *Ansāb al-ašrāf* 5 (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Edition, 1936): 47.

65 B.R. Foster, "Agoranomos and Muḥtasib." *JESHO* 13 (1970): 128-44; T.F. Glick, "Muhtasib and Mustasaf: A case Study of Institutional Diffuion." *Viator* 2 (1971): 59-81.

post was secular, on the Late Roman model, and alluded to the orderly running of the marketplace, with regard to weights, scales or measures. However, compared to Late Antiquity, medieval market inspectors were increasingly nominated by the *qāḍī*s who were in charge of the mosques, or were themselves former Islamic judicial office-holders, such as, for instance, Iyās b. Muʻāwiya, who was *qāḍī* in Baṣra, before becoming *ʻāmil al-sūq* in Wāsiṭ in Iraq in 723.[66]

During the period of early ʻAbbāsid rule, between the reigns of al-Manṣūr (754-775) and al-Maʻmūn (813-833), the role of the market inspector, renamed as *muḥtasib*, evolved further in response to the formation of Islamic jurisprudence, as has been outlined by Edouardo Manzano and Susana Narotzky.[67] The market inspector's investiture became a ceremonial event and he acquired Islamic religious and moral obligations in addition to his duties in the market-place.[68] In this way the moral actions of the inspectors were more prominent in the role than they had been for officials of the Late Roman period. The market-places in the early Islamic Middle East developed within the moral prerogatives of Islam, which were actively applied to economic matters in a way that Christian morality was not in the Christian kingdoms of the West. The tenth- to eleventh-century *ḥisba* manuals that refer to the control of commercial affairs, produced by the jurisconsults Zaydī and al-Māwardī, as well as the Arab chronicles, attest to the evolution of the inspectors' responsibilities from the ninth century.[69] The inspector was at this point empowered to encourage the orderly and equitable running of the marketplace as well as to ensure the correct execution of Islamic ritual. This included the prohibition upon the export of weapons to non-Muslim lands, and the ban upon Muslims from selling objects considered impure, such as wine, pork, and animals where the rituals of slaughter had not been observed,

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66 Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʼrīḫ* 2, secunda series: 1347; Wakīʻ, *Aḫbār al-quḍāh* 1 (Cairo, 1947): 353.

67 S. Narotzky, E. Manzano, "The Ḥisba, the Muḥtasib and the Struggle over Political Power and a Moral Economy. An Enquiry into Institutions." In *Diverging Paths? The Shapes of Power and Institutions in Medieval Christendom and Islam*, eds. J. Hudson and A. Rodriguez (Leiden: Brill, 2014): 30-54.

68 R.P. Buckley, "The *Muḥtasib*": 65-7.

69 M. Rodinson, "Les conditions religieuses islamiques de la vie économique." In *Geschichte der Islamischen Länder* 1 (Leiden: Handbuch der Orientalistik, 1977): 18-30.

along with the control of the activities of the money-changers.[70] Another target of the *muḥtasib*'s attention was the slave market (*sūq al-raqīq*), where he ensured slaves were correctly treated. He also had to ensure the clear passage of public highways.[71] In a society marked by a strong impulse to secure continuity between the teachings of the Qu'rān and the organisation of economic life, the market inspector combined both a judicial function and the role of enforcing the moral obligations of Islam in the market-place.

As part of his duties, the *muḥtasib* kept the regulation of market exchange under the influence of local judges (*qāḍī*) and religious scholars ('*ulamā*') in order to reduce the role of the imperial authority in the economy, which had been significant in the Late Roman and Sasanian empires.[72] The imperial authority could become involved in trade to provide standards and guarantees, but not control or fix prices as this was against Islamic morality. Caliphs and local governors could encounter the opposition of the religious authorities.[73] Muslim theologians were against intervention in the form of price fixing;[74] their opposition apparently took its inspiration from a tradition that was recorded in the early eighth century by the traditionalists Ibn Abī GHassan and Ibn Zubāla, and then much later by al-Samhūdī in the fifteenth century. According to this tradition, Muḥammad demanded that merchants be free to fix their own prices, instigating this practice in the market of Medina.[75] It is most likely that the Umayyads and early 'Abbāsids also took a similar approach. Certainly there is little evidence of imperial involvement in market regulation and price-fixing in the ninth-century chronicles to suggest otherwise. The chronicler

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[70] R.P. Buckley, "The *Muḥtasib*": 87-9.

[71] R.B. Serjeant, "A Zaidi Manual of *Hisbah* of the 3rd Century (H)." In *Studies in Arabic History and Civilisation* (London, 1981): 18; R.P. Buckley, "The *Muḥtasib*": 92-3.

[72] In Late Roman Syria, price fixation took place locally in consultations between commercial corporations and the prefecture, while in Sassanid Iraq and Iran, it was carried out by the chief of the merchant class or *vāstryōšbaḏ*. B.T. Rozenfelt, *Markets and Marketing in Roman Palestine* (Leiden: Brill, 2005): 137-41; T. Daryaee, "Sassanian Persia (224-651)." *Iranian Studies* 31 (1998): 453; "Bazaars, Merchants, and Trade in Late Antique Iran." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 30/3 (2010): 401-9.

[73] Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-ḫarāǧ* (Leiden: Brill, 1969): 103-4.

[74] Abū Yūsuf, *al-ḫarāǧ*: 103-104.

[75] M.J. Kister, "The Market": 272-276.

al-Ṭabarī[76] indicates that al-Manṣūr could use his influence to limit price fluctuations that otherwise might lead to confusion and rebellion.[77] It is likely that this example of elite involvement in the manipulation of prices was not uncommon, despite religious interdicts. Nevertheless, it seems that the objections of religious authorities to elite interference in the marketplace posed a considerable deterrent to their control of prices and regular intervention in trade.

The moderate influence of early Muslim caliphs in trade allowed the merchants greater latitude to conduct their business. In doing so, it helped make commerce the mainspring of urban economic growth in the Middle East during the eighth and ninth centuries. The prevalence of the Ḥanafī legal school in Iraq that distinguished itself in placing more reliance on independent reasoning and local customs as a source of law, than on oral traditions, favoured this development. The Ḥanafī legal advisers had a liberal vision of economy, an understanding of the interests of the merchants and of the necessities of commerce, considering with flexibility the practical issues and succeeding, by plotting subterfuges, in circumventing certain disturbing prohibitions such as interest loans.[78] In the eighth and ninth centuries, Middle Eastern market exchanges benefited greatly from this religious and judicial approval. Merchants, who were building inventories of goods and waiting for an increase in their value, no longer found barriers limiting such activities.[79]

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[76] Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīḫ* 1, Prima Series: 435.

[77] This happened later during the early tenth century, under the caliphate of al-Muqtadir (908-932) and the vizirat of Ḥāmid b. al-'Abbās. See Ibn Al-Jawzī, *Al-Muntaẓam fi tārīḫ al-mulūk wa al-umam* 6 (Hyderabad: Maṭba'at dā'irat al-ma'ārif al-uṯmāniyyat, 1937): 156.

[78] M. Rodinson, Les conditions religieuses: 18-30.

[79] However, evidence of Roman and Late Roman speculation is not uncommon. For instance, Kyle Harper in his work on slavery in the Late Roman world demonstrates, with reference to evidence from papyri, that in Egypt some of the civic notables who were prominent in slave sales were engaged in speculation – buying from merchants and re-selling locally. K. Harper, *Slavery in the Late Roman World*, AD 275–425 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 96; J.-M. Carrié, "Were Late Roman and Byzantine Economies Market Economies?" In *Trade and Markets in Byzantium*, ed. C. Morrisson (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 2012): 16.

While most Carolingian market-places were used to supplement an income from estates, market-places in the early Islamic Middle East by contrast developed as a discrete and distinct method of wealth creation. In Carolingian Europe, the economy functioned on a pattern of local trade, without any sort of orientation towards long-distance exchange.[80] This condition left only a limited field of action to commerce. Trade took place in a small number of natural and manufactured commodities, which arose from an excess of production. Most market-places we know in Western Europe were local.[81] The multiplicity of seigniorial monopolies and tolls, the scarcity and difficulty of means of transport, and the imperfection of instruments of credit were all obstacles to the circulation of merchandise. Compared to Carolingian Europe, the great movement of expansion of trading networks and *emporia* in the first centuries of Islam fuelled the development of urban market-places in the Middle East from 700 to 950. In a favourable political, demographic and economic atmosphere, the late Umayyad and early 'Abbasid rulers took the surviving elements of Late Roman and Sasanian commercial centres and developed them in their own way to serve their needs.

Within the string of Quranic revelations, there are many allusions to trade, ranging from direct injunctions about how transactions should be carried out to imagery describing religion as a transaction between man and God. This new attitude towards wealth creation manifested itself in the greater capital input of imperial authority in urban market-places, the sympathetic religious atmosphere for the development of commerce and profits (as long as it was conducted within certain moral boundaries), and the growing development of market-places as areas devoted exclusively to retail. The imperial authority's concern with its possessions and accumulation of wealth, and the merchants' concern to increase their scope of activities, together reveal a logic of economic *consciousness* and *calculation* that is deserving of further investigation.

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[80] M. Costambeys, M. Innes, S. Maclean, *The Carolingian World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 353-75.

[81] O. Bruand, *Voyageurs et marchandises aux temps carolingiens. Les réseaux de communication entre Loire et Meuse aux VIIIe et IXe siècles* (Brussels: De Boeck Université, 2002): 145-6.

Bibliography

Abbreviations

JESHO – Journal of the Economy and Society of Orient

JSAI - Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam

BSOAS – Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies

AJA – American Journal of Archaeology

JRA – Journal of Roman Archaeology

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